

The Presidential Coalition Statement In Reply To Axios

This is fake news brought to you by a collaboration of the biased liberal media and unabashed left-wing activists.

Campaign Legal Center (“CLC”) has a major conflict of interest and is not a credible source for criticizing the work of The Presidential Coalition (“TPC”), which is an affiliate of Citizens United. The group is far from a neutral observer. It is made up largely of former FEC officials and left-wing activists who have made a career out imposing excessive regulatory burdens on the exercise of 1st Amendment rights, especially in the political arena.

For at least 15 years Citizens United has been butting heads with CLC and its lawyers. The group is a highly vocal and fierce critic of the landmark Citizens United v. FEC case. CLC has apparently failed to disclose that it filed multiple amicus briefs opposing CU’s case as it progressed through the courts and even opposed CU’s efforts to obtain an FEC advisory opinion prior to the lawsuit, which would have eliminated the need for bringing the case. It should therefore come as no surprise that CLC would undertake a highly biased analysis of a Citizens United affiliate, which fails to give appropriate context to the organization’s activities.

- The Presidential Coalition has had the same name, Pennsylvania Avenue address, logo and mission since the group’s founding in 2005, which is long before President Trump was elected.
- The Presidential Coalition is proud of its work supporting conservative state and local candidates. The group has been open and transparent in its work since inception and will continue to be so in the future. All of its receipts and expenditures of \$200 or more are publically disclosed on IRS Form 8872, yet CLC’s report infers it dug deep to discover that TPC gave around \$425,000 in direct contributions to candidates in the 2017-18 election cycle. That “discovery” should have required virtually no effort at all since TPC posts its candidate contributions on its website for the whole world to see.
- Quoting a spokesperson from the Center for Responsive Politics to validate the work of CLC is absurd because they both have a long history that illustrates their anti-Citizens United bias. For all practical purposes the two groups are alter egos of one another, and both suffer from the same conflicts of interest. Both are longtime critics of Citizens United and its landmark Supreme Court victory. These two outfits regularly work hand in glove to impose highly restrictive state campaign finance laws and regulations that severely limit the ability of TPC and similar groups to make direct contributions to candidates. Having impeded that ability, they have the audacity to criticize TPC for employing the same type of legitimate alternative political measures, such as internal membership communications, that liberal groups and public sector unions have employed for decades to rally their voters.
- CLC claims to oppose the proliferation of big money in politics, yet it criticizes TPC because two thirds of its supporters donate less than \$200 per year.

Compare this to CLC's record. According to the publicly available copy of CLC's 2017 IRS Form 990, the group received over 75% of its nearly six million in funding that year from just ten donors. TPC has never been part of the Washington, DC establishment so it doesn't rely on big donors. We enjoy the grassroots support of tens of thousands of conservatives across the country.

- CLC claims to support transparency by disclosing its major funding sources, but its record is far from consistent with what it demands of others. Yes, the CLC website provides the names of its major funding sources, but it does not disclose the amounts given by the listed donors. Nor does CLC disclose the identity of its major funding sources in its publically available IRS Form 990. Thus, TPC has far more donor transparency then does CLC.
- CLC claims TPC gives only a small percentage of its gross receipts in direct contributions to candidates, but the group's analysis totally ignores the legitimate staff, infrastructure and other political activity costs associated with the organization's work. The vast majority of our members fully understand that our activities are not limited to just direct candidate contributions.
- As is the case with many non-profits, CLC included, a major portion of the organization's program expenses are composed of staff and infrastructure costs. The same is true of the major political party committees and many candidate committees. In addition, many of TPC's political activities involve internal membership activities, which CLC ought to know are not subject to public disclosure on state or federal campaign finance reports.
- Another major criticism is the high cost of fundraising. But unlike CLC which relies on fewer than a dozen unidentified major donors for 75% of its funding, TPC funding, by and large, comes from individual donors who give on average significantly less than \$200 per year. As is the case with nearly all groups that rely on small donors, it is expensive to raise substantial amounts in small donor contributions using direct mail, digital, and telemarketing. After all, the single biggest cost associated with direct mail is the price of postage, which is set by the U.S. Postal Service. Groups with significantly lower fundraising costs, such as the Republican Governors Association, Club for Growth and even CLC, are heavily reliant on big money donors.
- The report criticizes TPC for sharing costs with related entities that include Citizens United and Citizens Untied Foundation. But the three entities are related groups and there is nothing inappropriate with taking advantage of economies of scale by sharing staff and infrastructure expenses. It's a very common practice among the non-profit community as a whole.
- TPC purchases books and DVDs, which are used as membership recruitment and renewal premiums. The organization has used quality book and DVD premiums as membership tools throughout its 15 year history. In 2018, TPC spent a small amount on Trump's Enemies. The bulk of the book premiums, however, were for copies of Trump's America, which was authored by former House Speaker Newt Gingrich. TPC members are very excited to receive these books and DVDs.

- Much is made over TPC's increased financial activity since President Trump took office. "CLC's report found that, after 2016 and President Trump's upset victory, contributions to the Presidential Coalition and the organization's expenditures skyrocketed, for a total of \$18 million raised and \$15.4 million spent during 2017 and 2018." But TPC's receipts and expenditures have had significant two-year election cycle ups and downs throughout its 15 year history.
- We're proud that the past couple of years have been especially fruitful. TPC makes no apology for building a multi-million war chest for deployment in the all-important 2020 elections.
- It's fairly obvious that TPC Founder and President David Bossie's long time association with President Trump dating back to 2010 has brought significant value to the organization. We are unfairly targeted by left-wing smear tactics because we are outspoken defenders of the President. We will never back down.